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ABSTRACT

This document presents a systematic, comparative review of three reports: (1) "Community Consultation on Prostitution in British Columbia: Overview of Results" (released in March 1996 by the Ministry of the Attorney General in British Columbia); (2) "Children Involved in Prostitution" (from Alberta in January 1997); and (3) "Position Paper on Law 212(4): A Time for Action" (produced by the Downtown Eastside Youth Activities from a survey conducted in Vancouver, British Columbia). Although each of these reports has been reviewed individually by the Downtown Service Providers (DTSP) Committee, an ad hoc committee comprised of representatives from providers of social services within the downtown core of Prince George, British Columbia, there seemed to be some level of discrepancy among the reports and the statistics revolving around the communal problem of youth prostitution. Hence, the need for this comparative evaluation. In Prince George as in other communities across Canada, adolescents under the age of 18, and some as young as 9 years old, are involved in youth prostitution. This paper focuses on identifying solutions to the problems of sexually exploited youth in Prince George by: (1) outlining the problems of community youth involved in prostitution; (2) providing a synthesis of recent reports from British Columbia and Alberta addressing youth prostitution; and (3) summarizing the responses of local professionals involved in providing service to local youth. The three papers synthesized shared the assumption that youth prostitution is serious and should be regarded as a form of child abuse. Recommendations for addressing this problem in Prince George focused on recognizing the seriousness of the problem and providing resources for prevention and helping children already involved. The recommendations included educational efforts to inform those involved with the issue, including teachers and students, and the provision of housing, shelters, and a detox center in the city of Prince George to meet the needs of local youth. (SLD)

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ED 461 683

CONSISTENT AND PERSISTENT: A Necessary Response to Children Involved in Prostitution

Submitted to: The Downtown Service Providers Committee of Prince George

Submitted by: L.Suzanne LeBlanc, Ph.D.

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Introduction

The Downtown Service providers are a group of agency representatives that were pulled together to provide input into the Community Planning Council's report *A Time For Action: A Report on the Issues of Downtown Revitalization.* This report acknowledged that there were many social issues including poverty, alcohol and drug abuse and prostitution, just to name a few, that have been seen as obstacles to revitalization efforts in the past. The group became increasingly concerned when prostitution continually got community wide attention when other issues and the roots causes of prostitution did not. It was acknowledged that there may not be effective interventions for those that had been on the street for some time but there had to be opportunities when it came to the youth that were working the street.

The release of *"Community Consultation on Prostitution in British Columbia: Overview of Results"* released in March of 1996 by the Ministry of the Attorney General in B.C. and *"Children Involved in Prostitution"* from Alberta in January of 1997, coincided with these local discussions. The Downtown Service Providers had also reviewed a slightly older document entitled *"Position Paper on Law 212(4): A Time for Action"* produced by the Downtown Eastside Youth Activities from a survey conducted in Vancouver. While all three documents provide valuable insights into the issue of youth involved in prostitution, it is unfortunate that the local research conducted by the Ministry of the Attorney General is inaccurate and that they have been unwilling to acknowledge, or correct, this to date. Local providers estimate that at the time the research was conducted by the Attorney General there were only 30-35 young people involved with prostitution in Prince George. At the time of this report there is approximately 45 young people working the street. This does not indicate a dramatic increase in youth prostitution but reflects natural fluctuations and the transiency of street life. In any case, these figures are far below the numbers recorded in the Attorney's General report.

Despite the flawed research, the group recognized that the B.C. report contained some excellent dialogue and suggested courses of action. The group also acknowledged that without a comparative review of the three reports, we might be missing some key information and innovative approaches that would be of assistance in our quest for local solutions. The Community Planning Council considered this locally based initiative an important one and recruited Suzanne LeBlanc, Ph.D. to conduct a systematic review of the three reports and to document the discussions. This document is the result of this process.

The Downtown Service Providers hope that this document will provide the basis for discussions and actions in our search for solutions and interventions to the tragedy of youth prostitution.

Murry Krause

Chair, Community Planning Council

Chair Downtown Service Providers

Executive Summary

In Prince George and other communities across the country, girls and boys under the age of 18, some as young as 9 years-old, are involved in prostitution. Most youth enter prostitution as a survival strategy. Many have left homes that are often abusive and once on the street they turn to prostitution to support themselves financially. In this community, there are approximately 45 youth involved in child prostitution. There are a further 100 to 200 children who are at risk of becoming involved with the street.

This paper focuses on identifying solutions to the problems of sexually exploited youth in Prince George. This is done by: (1) outlining the problems of youth involved in prostitution in the community of Prince George; (2) providing a synthesis of recent reports (from British Columbia and Alberta) addressing youth in prostitution in order to present up-to-date information and recommendations; and (3) summarizing the responses of the local (Prince George) professionals involved in providing service to the problem of youth involved in prostitution.

The synthesis of three recently released reports identifies key issues and recommendations made to address this problem. The three papers shared the assumption that the problem with youth involved in prostitution is serious and should be treated as a form of child abuse. The papers address the problem using a multi-pronged approach. The key areas addressed are: defining the issue, data collection, law and enforcement, social services, education, housing, and health.

The Prince George Downtown Service Providers agree with the recommendations made by these reports on the problem of youth involved in prostitution and identify some key needs to the Prince George community specifically. In Prince George, there are children currently involved in prostitution. This is a serious problem which should be defined as one of child abuse. The recommendations made to address this problem focus on emphasizing the seriousness of the problem and on providing the necessary resources to prevent children from getting involved in prostitution and to help those currently involved get off the street. These include supplementing existing programs with both financial and human resources if they are to address the issue effectively; developing educational resources to inform those involved with this issue and the wider population of the nature of the problem with youth involved in prostitution in Prince George; to develop more housing, shelters, and a detox. centre in Prince George to address the needs of the youths in question, and finally for the legal system to take stronger action on this issue.

PART 1: PRINCE GEORGE SITUATION

Prince George, like other communities in Canada, is dealing with the problem of children involved in prostitution. In this community, there are up to 45 youth involved in child prostitution. There are a further 100 to 200 children who are at risk of becoming involved with the street.[1]

The size of the problem in Prince George differs from other communities in British Columbia. The 1996 British Columbia *Community Consultation on Prostitution in British Columbia: Overview of Results* report provides profiles for several communities. For example, the Attorney General estimates that Kamloops has a total of 80 adult prostitutes with 20 youth. Vancouver has 200-300 female prostitutes, 100-150 male prostitutes with 30-40 youth prostitutes on any given night. Prince George has 200 youth prostitutes with 15 on any given night.[2]

The figures for Prince George are seriously flawed. According to the Attorney General's calculations, Prince George has as many youths involved in prostitution as Vancouver has adult females involved in prostitution. Further, these numbers do not take into consideration the relative size of the community. Since the size of these communities varies considerably, it is important to factor in the population of the community in order to understand the relative size of prostitution involving youth. According to the most recent data available, the 1991 Census, Vancouver's population was 471,844; Kamloops was 67,057, and Prince George, 69,653. By computing the ratio of youth to the population and using the A-G's figures of youth involved, we note that, for every 100,000 people, Vancouver has 7.5 youth working in prostitution while Kamloops has 30 and Prince George 65. [3]

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[1] Numbers for the Prince George situation provided by Deryl Brin, of the Reconnect Program which works with street youth in Prince George. Deryl Brin, personal communication, April 8, 1997.

[2] See: Attorney General of British Columbia, *Community Consultation on Prostitution in British Columbia: Overview of Results*, March 1996. p. 3.

[3] The calculation is: rate of youth prostitution / population = rate per population. This rate per population is a value that controls for the different populations and enables us to compare across populations. To estimate the rate of youth prostitution in Prince George, if it had the same population as Vancouver. The rate per population is multiplied by the population of Vancouver.

Although prostitution is a ubiquitous problem, the forms of prostitution vary by community. In large centres such as Vancouver, a wider range exists including escort agencies, trick pads, massage and shiatsu parlours. In Prince George prostitution occurs in two primary forms, street prostitution and escort agencies, with a few known specialized 'fronts' including massage parlours.

In communities across Canada, youth under the age of 18 are involved in prostitution. The average age for girls to become involved in prostitution is around 14 or 15. Boys start a few years later on average. Some youth enter as young as 8 or 9. Nearly all adults enter as youth.

The youths end up on the streets in different ways. Recent reports from British Columbia and Alberta note that girls are usually recruited by a pimp who preys on their particular vulnerabilities, offering them 'love' and meeting their basic needs for survival. Pimps actively recruit young girls from schools and shopping malls. These individuals are often skilled in attracting and keeping youth dependent and exploited. For the youth in Prince George, entry into prostitution is less frequently through a pimp than a boyfriend, family members, or a peer already involved on the street (Linda Keefe, personal communication, April 9).

For the children that get involved in prostitution it is often seen as a temporary means of survival: for food, for shelter, clothes or other necessities. From interviews with youth, other reasons cited include family problems, procurement by family or boyfriend, and "for fun". The longer they are involved in prostitution, however, the stronger their ties become and the more difficult it is to leave.

Many individuals involved in prostitution have a history of abuse which leads them into prostitution and makes it difficult for them to leave. Twenty of the twenty-one youth from communities across British Columbia interviewed in the BC report had been abused prior to working on the street.

Physical and sexual abuse continues for those involved in prostitution from both johns and pimps. These assaults are rarely reported to the police. Seventeen youth interviewed across the province said that they had been abused while working on the streets. None of these were reported. There are other serious risks associated with prostitution including sexually transmitted diseases, HIV. A large proportion are addicted to alcohol and/or drugs. In Prince George, most of the youth involved with prostitution have either a cocaine or heroin problem (Deryl Brin, personal communication, April 8). The addiction often plays a role in keeping them on the street.

Like the majority of the youths involved in prostitution, many of the youths in Prince George leave school without grade eight. Of the youth interviewed, only a few still attended school. Consequently, for these children, few or no alternatives exist as they have little education and little or no job skills.

Section 2: Synthesis Of Current Information On Youth Involved In Prostitution.

In the last year, three reports were released addressing the problem of youth involved in prostitution. This section of the paper presents a synthesis of the following three reports: (1) the Community Consultation on Prostitution in British Columbia: Overview of Results produced in March of 1996 from British Columbia's Ministry of the Attorney General (identified below as the BC report); (2) the Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Survey's Position Paper on Law 212(4): A Time of Action (identified below as the DEYAS report); and (3) the Alberta Task Force on Children Involved in Prostitution's report Children Involved in Prostitution produced in January of 1997 (identified below as the Alberta report).

The purpose of this synthesis is to identify the key issues and recommendations made in these reports. Although the three papers differed somewhat in their focus, methodology, and presentation, they shared the assumption that the problem with youth involved in prostitution is serious and should be treated as a form of child abuse. Following this assumption, the reports developed a number of recommendations. The papers share a multi-pronged approach to addressing the problem of youth involved in prostitution. The key areas addressed are: defining the issue, data collection, the law and enforcement, social services, education, housing and shelter, and health. The findings and recommendations are discussed using these major areas.

1. DEFINING THE ISSUE

A. Naming The Problem

The three reports are unanimous in stating that the problem of youth involved in prostitution is very real and should be defined as one of sexual abuse. That is, children involved in prostitution are victims and consequently, johns, pimps, and other adults involved in youth prostitution are child abusers. The reports concur that the

manner in which this problem is conceptualized and named plays a large role in how it is perceived and consequently, how it is addressed.

Some terms used in the media and elsewhere to name the problem are derogatory, while others leave the perception that this is a victimless crime. The reports are unanimous that the problem should be conceptualized as child abuse.

Children involved in prostitution can be seen in a variety of ways: as victims of sexual abuse; as offenders of a crime; or as individuals making a lifestyle choice. The Task Force believes these children should be seen as victims of abuse. These children, if not abused while at home, are certainly victims of sexual abuse when they are used by either a pimp or john (Alberta report, p. 3).

The reports recommend that this conceptualization should guide the manner in which the problem is addressed by various agencies dealing with children involved in prostitution.

Recommendations:

•all three reports recommend that it is crucial to define this problem in a manner that clearly identifies the fact that children involved in prostitution are victims of abuse.

•recommendations and changes be made to address this problem keeping this conceptualization of child abuse in mind.

•that initiative should be taken to communicate the definition of child prostitution as abuse to the general community and to those involved with this issue.

•policies, procedures, and protocols should be examined and where necessary revised to ensure that they recognize child prostitution as sexual abuse and incorporate this concept into their practice.

B. Age

The Alberta report notes that in the Criminal Code there is no consistent definition of children and youth in regards to age. Some sections of the Criminal Code refer to offenses with children under age 14, while others refer to those under the age of 18. The Alberta report recommends that "the law should be consistent in its application of the definition of a "child", as it relates to prostitution related offenses" (p. 13). The report recommends in the case of prostitution, youth or children should be those under the age of 18.

Recommendation:

•amend the relevant Criminal Code sections to reflect the fact that youth in the case of prostitution refers to those under the age of 18.

•children or youth should be defined as those under the age of 18 years.

2. DATA COLLECTION

The three reports concur that too few systematic data are kept on this issue. Consequently, the exact size and nature of problem is hard to determine. "One of the issues that emerged was the lack of solid information about prostitution: who are the johns, how many youth are being sexually procured, etc." (BC report, p. 3).

The Alberta report also notes that it is common for youth to move from city to city and across provinces. Yet, "there is currently no shared system which allows for expanded identification capabilities or an accurate way of tracking a child's movement from province to province" (Alberta report, p.18). In order to better address the problem, it is important that some form of effective and systematic data gathering and sharing across jurisdictions be established.

Recommendation:

•more research is needed to gather solid information on the problem of youth involved in prostitution.

•the police be encouraged to explore the feasibility of using a computer program to assist in gathering data on the problem of children in prostitution and to assist in communication and possibly enhance enforcement efforts between law enforcement agencies.

•the Federal Government take the initiative to introduce a computer program, such as the computer tracking system recently instituted by the British Columbia Prostitution Unit, Fight Against Child Exploitation (FACES), to be used across Canada. This system will provide effective linkages in tracking and locating children involved in prostitution throughout Canada. *

*NOTE: The RCMP in B.C., including Prince George, are currently using the FACES computer program.

3. THE LAW AND ENFORCEMENT

The findings from the reports suggest that the legal system as it exists today is not adequately meeting the needs of these children. All the reports make recommendations regarding how the legal system can be modified to address the problem of children involved in prostitution. The DEYAS paper focuses on the legal issues, particularly on Law 212(4)[3]. The Alberta and BC reports also address this law as well as other aspects of the legal system. The following summary is based primarily on the DEYAS report, incorporating information from the other two reports when relevant.

There are a number of laws aimed at addressing the problem of youth prostitution. The DEYAS report claims that the way the laws are currently enforced in Vancouver result in arrests of the youth, yet few arrests of johns and pimps: youth are charged 59 times more often for selling sex than johns for buying sex. In 6 years, only 6 men were charged in Vancouver under Law 212(4), while 354 youth were charged under Law 213.[4] According to the DEYAS report, police say that "arresting the child/youth is often the only way that they can get a handle on them" and that according to the Crown counsel, it is difficult for police to obtain sufficient evidence to support a prosecution of johns and pimps (p.3). The report notes that police "want to charge kids' customers (under Law 212(4)) but (they) say they cannot" (p. 6). Consequently, the 'message' sent to society when youth are arrested and johns continue procuring youth without conviction is that youth are "equal consenting partners in the crime of

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3 Law 212(4) states: "Every person who, in any place, obtains or attempts to obtain, for sexual consideration, the sexual services of a person who is under the age of eighteen years is guilty of an indictable offense and is liable to a term of imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years."

4 Law 213 states: "Every person who in a public place or in any place open to public view (c) stops or attempts to stop any person or in any manner communicates or attempts to communicate with any person for purpose of engaging in prostitution or of obtaining the sexual services of a prostitute is guilty of an offense punishable on summary conviction."

communicating for purposes of prostitution" (p.7) and "buying or stealing sex from a kid is okay..." (p.2).

The DEYAS report notes that arresting youth does not help them get out of prostitution. These youth have few options open to them beyond prostitution as this is a main reason they entered in the first place. The 'choice' of entering prostitution is a result of limited viable options for survival. This survival comes with a heavy price. They are often in abusive relationships, experience violence on the street, and they are much more vulnerable to violence and murder (p.2). In order for these youths to choose to leave the street, they must be provided with the resources which will give them other options and more choices rather than being arrested. The report recommends changing Law 213.

The findings from the BC report concur with this recommendation. Most youth interviewed in the BC report stated that they had had dealings with the police and had been arrested for soliciting, drugs, or thefts. Youth recommended that youth should not be arrested but rather receive support through programs and services. They further recommended "that police stop harassing them and be more understanding 'human' and 'compassionate'" (BC report, p. 9).

Beyond the moral issues underlying arresting youth involved in prostitution and failing to arrest johns, the report notes that arresting johns has the potential of having more impact. Johns who are arrested and convicted "rarely re-offend". Further, statistics indicate that johns averaged 20 to 25 sexual transactions before they are first caught, given this, it is crucial that quick action is taken to arrest and convict johns.

According to the DEYAS report the way Law 212(4) is worded makes it very difficult for police to enforce for several reasons. First, they cannot carry out sting operations. The john must be caught buying or attempting to buy a minor. Adult police decoys cannot be used since they are not minors and police cannot legally use minors as agents. They cannot allow the actual procurement to occur. This would make them legally at risk and if they interrupt the transaction, they cannot charge the john. The

report recommends modifying the law to allow for easier enforcement.

Second, Vancouver police say they cannot enforce Law 212(4) unless the youth testifies against the customer. Most youth refuse to cooperate with the police and Crown prosecutors. The reasons noted is that 'snitching' is punished on the street and because the Crown puts 100% of evidentiary onus on the juveniles (p.2). The DEYAS report recommends that Law 212(4) must be changed to remove the onus on the youth to testify against adults to ensure a conviction. The report suggests allowing other witnesses to testify such as community members who witness these crimes occurring on their streets as well as other willing individuals such as teachers, school counsellors, social workers, doctors and nurses to testify on behalf of the youth. The report notes that this practice is allowed in child abuse cases and could be extended to youth prostitution cases.

The BC and Alberta reports stress that youth who testify against customers or pimps should be protected and supported by police and support agencies. The Alberta report further notes that Bill C-27 seeks to make it easier for children to testify in court and that results from task force consultation suggests that a key factor is timeliness of trials.

The report notes that other provinces, such as Quebec has used Law 212(4) to arrest and prosecute johns. In 1993, 71 charges were laid and 29 guilty convictions were made. Although this statistic is mentioned in the DEYAS report, no comment is made regarding why the differences across the provinces exists. It would be useful to understand why these interprovincial differences exist in enforcement of this law since this would help in the recommendation of better law enforcement strategies in BC. The difference in statistics between Quebec and Vancouver suggests that the problem does not rest entirely with the way the law is worded, but also with the priorities of law enforcers in dealing with this problem through arrests and prosecution.

The reports note that johns and pimps keep prostitution alive and must be dealt with seriously and effectively. The types

and length of sentences convicted should be strengthened and the law be made easier to enforce. Former johns now involved with Sexual Addicts Anonymous noted that most johns were men with multiple addictions which affected their abilities to make rational decisions. Most noted that only penalties with a mandatory treatment component would be successful (BC report).

Recommendations:

•the types and lengths of sentences for pimps and johns convicted under Section 212 of the Criminal Code be strengthened, and the law be made easier to enforce:

•amend Subsection 212(2) of the Criminal Code to include all offenses mentioned in Subsection 212(1), and provide mandatory jail sentences.

•subsection 212(4) of the Criminal Code to provide for a mandatory jail sentence.

•subsection 212(4) of the Criminal Code to make it easier to enforce, by adding the following to the definition: "a person who holds himself or herself to be under the age of 18 years". [Note the DEYAS report notes that this option is useful for VICE sting operations but leaves patrol officers as impotent to arrest youth's clients as they say they are now. The report does not recommend an alternate wording].

•section 741.2 of the Criminal Code be amended to include all of Section 212 in the list of offenses.

•justice advise its Crown Prosecutors to routinely inform a judge, prior to sentencing, that the charges involve a child.

•children not be arrested under Sections 210 and 213 of the Criminal Code for engaging in prostitution or being found in common bawdy houses.

•courts pursue options which would ensure trials involving child prostitution proceed in a timely manner.

•courts consider implementing special screening for trials involving child witnesses. Other related recommendations include witness protection programs, support services. The DEYAS report recommends allowing community participation in the legal proceedings and removing the onus from children to testify against adults.

Other Recommendation Made in the Reports to Strengthen the Ability to Address this Issue:

•to publish the names of those convicted.*

•to be able to photograph and fingerprint johns. This would lead to better tracking. S. 213 is currently defined as a summary offense which means offenders are not fingerprinted or photographed and they do not receive a formal criminal record. This needs to be changed.

•amend the Criminal Code to include all of section 210 and 212 in the list of offenses for which an authorization to intercept a private communication can be granted. This would be authorizing a "wire tap" under certain circumstances.

•since motor vehicles are places most often used. Limit traffic in certain areas.

•law enforcement agencies should be informed that Revenue Canada can and should be notified if undeclared income is suspected and that "proceeds of crime" units be notified when a pimp is investigated.

•those convicted, if not Canadian Citizens should be deported. Individuals entering Canada should be told that child prostitution is sexual abuse and that there are serious consequences to engaging in these activities.

* NOTE: The Prince George Free Press currently does this.

4. SOCIAL SERVICES

The three reports agreed that law enforcement alone would not be effective. Social factors that lead people into prostitution and keeps them there need also to be addressed (BC report). It was further agreed that services directed at children involved in prostitution work together to avoid duplication and service gaps and to maximize efficiency and cost effectiveness. "The youth should be provided with the services they need without feeling "shuffled" between departments and agencies" (Alberta report). Following this, the Alberta report recommends that a Child Involvement in Prostitution Act should be developed to provide legislative support for a continuum of services for children.

The Alberta report notes that key issues for these youth are shame, substance abuse, mental health issues, nocturnal lifestyle, lack of education, life skills, and job readiness skills. These make the youth involved in prostitution hard to assist. "In order to assist youth to leave the streets, they must have a means of support to address the barriers that exist for them." Children involved in prostitution often reject help, or aren't sure how to accept it. Support must be consistent and persistent for a child to leave the street.

According to the BC report some of the resources currently used by youth include outreach services to connect with youth, form relationships and facilitate and support their readiness to leave the streets. The BC report notes that almost all youth interviewed had been in contact with outreach workers (17 of 21). Most had positive experiences with them. Both BC and Alberta report a need for more outreach workers.

The DEYAS report recommends that the then Ministry of Social Services (now Ministry for Child and Family Services) be vigilant in investigating all reports of clients buying or seeking to buy sex from children under Section 4 of the Child Protection Act.

Recommendations:

•services for children involved in prostitution be planned in a collaborative manner amongst all levels of government departments, municipal authorities, community and non-government organizations.

•service delivery in all jurisdictions work together toward strategic alliances to ensure seamless services from outreach and crisis intervention through treatment to continuing support. Each youth should have the benefit of a coordinated case management approach, where all members of the team work together for the benefit of the youth.

•the provincial government should ensure gaps in services are identified, and assist in addressing them; to ensure communities offer a system of strategic alliances, whereby a youth can move from one agency to another without a disruption of services.

•the Child Welfare Act should be amended to acknowledge child prostitution as abuse. [Section 1(3)(c).]

•more outreach workers be hired.

5. HOUSING/SHELTER

Another key issue to emerge from the reports is adequate housing and shelter for youth. The reports state that a variety of housing which addresses the needs of this population specifically is essential. According to the BC report, most youth stated that their experiences with transition housing had been good ones (positive, supportive, and non-judgemental). The youth identified the key features of the transition house as the staff, the resources such as food, shelter and laundry, and accessibility (BC report).

Recommendations:

•accommodations (safehouses) where youth can live in safety, and receive initial assessment and short term counselling when it is not possible for them to return home.

•accommodation (group homes) where youth with substance abuse issues, in addition to psychological, emotional, and sexuality issues, can receive counselling and care.

•there is a need for more housing programs with built-in counselling services care.

•safe houses are needed for women with children, who have drug/alcohol problems.

•on going support/outreach after 'recovery' has occurred.

6. FAMILIES OF THE YOUTH

According to the Alberta report, an increased emphasis with connecting youth with their family to rebuild linkages and strengthen family functioning is needed. The families of sexually procured youth have been frustrated by the fragmentation of services and the inability of the system to respond to their requests for help dealing with their children. Better coordination and consistency of programs and initiatives is needed.

Recommendations:

•interministerial strategic planning to ensure better coordination and consistency of programs and initiatives.

•giving communities key roles in allocating funding.

•police should determine a primary contact for parents requiring information and advice.

7. EDUCATION

The three reports are unanimous in stating that education is a key component for addressing this problem. The focus should be widespread. Recommendations are made to prevent children from getting involved with prostitution by creating greater education and awareness of this problem in homes, schools, and communities. Youth need to understand prostitution and it should be de-glamorized. Youth should be told about recruitment process in order to defend themselves. The reports state that this can be done through the schools (Alberta and BC reports).

Teachers and parents need to be aware of the warning signs and be cognizant of the resources in their community which are there to assist young people. There is a BC Information Guide for Parents, Counsellors, Youth Agencies, Teachers and the Police which is an excellent resource and should be used (Alberta report).

All individuals in the helping professions should be aware of the issues. To this end, the Alberta report recommends that information on this issue be taught in colleges and university to students in helping professions. Professionals currently working in the field should also be informed of the issues.

The public needs to become aware of the seriousness of child prostitution. The DEYAS report notes the problem of attitudes regarding youth prostitution. Media portrayals of youth prostitution has generally stressed blaming youth and portraying them as "promiscuous" and "sexualized" rather than as 'sexually exploited kids'. Media strategies pointing out the seriousness of this problem should be engaged (Alberta report).

Finally, the youth involved in prostitution must be given the opportunity to further their education and receive the training in skills that will enable them to find alternate ways to support themselves. Most youth across the province consulted in the BC report (20 of 21) said that they wanted to further their education and receive other forms of training (12 of 21). According to the Alberta report their specific needs must be addressed. The report notes that structured schools may not be the best alternatives.

"They are not used to structure; their days and nights are often switched; they distrust authority" (p. 24). Education must be seen as part of the treatment process to these youth. Adjustments need to be made to help attract and keep youth interested and involved in returning to school to further their education.

Recommendations:

•an awareness program is developed for students in all schools regarding child prostitution. The material should target all the grades (ages) most likely to be at risk of recruitment or running away; and provide awareness to all youth. This material should be presented by specially trained facilitators.

•information be provided to all upper elementary, junior and senior high school educators regarding the issue of child prostitution. Material should be developed and an appropriate approach to delivering the information needs to be determined. Information to educators must be delivered annually and should include at least the following: risk factors/ early identifications; resources available in local communities; child prostitution defined as sexual abuse; current issues and trends, e.g., language, new recruitment strategies, etc.

•universities and colleges with programs geared toward "helping professions" provide information to students regarding child prostitution.

•the training should be provided to other helping professionals annually.

•the information developed for students, educators, and other helping professionals be made available to parents and parent groups in all schools.

•the governments of all levels work in consultation with communities and the media to establish a strategy to raise public awareness regarding the issue of child prostitution.

•educational opportunities be made available to children who are involved in prostitution recognizing their special needs and requirement for alternate and flexible programming. This alternative education needs to encourage youth to return to school and support reintegration into the traditional school system when the youth is ready.

8. HEALTH ISSUES

A key concern for youth involved in prostitution is health. According the Alberta report, the literature is clear that children involved in prostitution neglect many health concerns. This is due to alcohol or drug abuse, lack of funds, lack of knowledge, and the chaos of street life, among other reasons. There are barriers to youth in accessing appropriate health services. Both the BC and Alberta reports make recommendations regarding access to health for these youth.

The BC report notes that youth do take advantage of some existing health-related programs. For example, all youth consulted in the BC report said they had access to free condoms and a large number of youth used the needle exchange program and free clinics.[5] From this report, the overall reaction to medical services was positive.

There is some concern expressed regarding accessibility of street level services for youth. Further, according to the BC report, there was misinformation regarding youth's access to medical coverage. Many youth believed they no longer had coverage because they no longer lived at home. Youth must be informed that they can and should get access to the medical services they need.

Many youth noted that they used drugs and alcohol on a regular basis. Few had wanted or tried to quit. Those who had been to detox. programs identified barriers to obtaining services including long waiting periods, lack of understanding by professionals, lack of activities, and the need for youth-specific centres (BC report).

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5 These services are currently available in Prince George through the Needle Exchange/Aids Prevention program.

Recommendations:

•street level health services be provided for children involved in prostitution. These services must be supportive, understanding of street issues, and help link the individual to the existing community services.

•youth must be informed that they can and should get access to the medical services they need.

•health care should be sensitive to the needs of youth on the street, by being available and accessible in terms of hours operation, location and cost.

•detox. programs geared to youth specifically should be available without long waiting periods.

9. FUNDING

Funding to address youth prostitution should be a priority. Funding strategies should reflect the proposed coordinated approach to addressing youth prostitution across agencies and departments. The Alberta report recommends that agencies report frustration with current funding models which appear to promote rivalry between agencies for a shrinking dollar. Competition for funding with social support service delivery is potentially eroding and divisive.

The Alberta program recommends that one way to collect funds is to force johns and pimps who are convicted contribute to the support programs and services that assist youth to leave prostitution. One avenue to do this is through the Victim's Program Assistance Fund which should recognize the child as a victim of the crime of sexual abuse.

Recommendation:

•increase funding to address the problem of children involved in prostitution.

•funders commit to funding stability, recognizing the issues of programming for short term or pilot projects.

•force johns and pimps who are convicted to contribute to the support programs and services that assist youth to leave prostitution through the Victim's Program Assistance Fund.

PART 3: LOOKING AT PRINCE GEORGE: DOWNTOWN SERVICE PROVIDERS RESPOND

This final section explores the specific needs of the Prince George community with respect to the problem of youth involved in prostitution. The information comes primarily from consultations with Downtown Service Providers. The focus of this section is to identify key factors needed by the Prince George community to address the problem of youth involved in prostitution.

Defining the Issue and Public Education

The Downtown Service Providers agree that youth involved with prostitution is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. They concur with the recommendation to define youth involved in prostitution as child abuse and agree that there is a need to deal with the problem from this perspective. They further agree that it is necessary that those involved with this issue and the wider population be informed of the nature of the problem with youth involved in prostitution in Prince George.

The Law And Enforcement

A number of problems with the existing laws aimed at addressing prostitution were identified by the reports. To address these problems, a series of recommendations were made. The Downtown Service Providers agree that the law and enforcement is an important component of a multi-pronged approach to this problem. To ensure that this problem is made a priority, it is important that those involved in all aspects of law enforcement be made aware of the seriousness of youth prostitution and to act accordingly. The community of Prince George must send the message to law enforcers that child abuse will not be tolerated. Further, the courts prosecuting individuals under Law 212(4) need to acknowledge the seriousness of this problem and impose sentences accordingly. Current sentences imposed under Law 212(4) amount to a slap on

the wrist. The average sentence is a $50 fine and three months probation. It is also necessary to strengthen the laws for johns and pimps as recommended in the reports to make it easier for police to apprehend and prosecute johns and pimps and to ensure that strong penalties can and are imposed on those found guilty.

Social Services

The reports recommend a multi-pronged approach to child prostitution that incorporates a number of social services. The major programs in Prince George to address youth prostitution include: Reconnect; the needle exchange/aids prevention program; the Friendship House Shelter; the A.W.A.C. shelter for women and children; and the Native Health Centre. These programs provide the basic infrastructure to address the problem but there are too few resources available for the current programs to enable them to operate at maximum efficiency. It is necessary to supplement these programs with both financial and human resources if they are to address the issue effectively.

Already established programs like Reconnect do not have the resources needed to service the existing population of street youth in Prince George. Reconnect is a provincial program mandated to "help those who are on the street to leave it for a healthier and safer lifestyle and to prevent other young people from becoming street kids" (BC, Ministry of Social Services). The problem operates through outreach workers who seek to build rapport and foster a trusting relationship with street youth in order to help them get access to appropriate resources and agencies as well as to support them in developing alternate lifestyle. The Reconnect program has 4 outreach workers for a case load of 250 children. These numbers mean that the program is only able to intervene on a crisis basis.

The available data tell us that the most effective solution to the problem of youth involved in prostitution is pro-active intervention. Prince George's Reconnect program recognizes the need to act pro-actively with youth who are at risk to falling prey to the streets, yet, it does not have the staff or resources to do so. In order to ensure the Reconnect program engage in necessary pro-

active intervention it needs to be supported financially and through human resources.

Reconnect offers a drop-in school program to provide street youth with the formal education they need in order to find alternate options beyond the street. The program runs in the afternoon and provides the flexibility needed for the youth who seek this program. Currently, there are 28 children using the resource, yet the school program has only a .4 teacher in place. In order to help the children who seek education, it is crucial that the teaching allocation reflect the demands made on it.

The Downtown Service Providers agreed with the reports that adequate housing and shelter for youth is necessary. A variety of housing which addresses the needs of this population specifically is needed. Currently Prince George has the Friendship House Shelter which allows children to stay up to six weeks and A.W.A.C. provides some short-term shelter for children. In order to meet the needs of children involved in prostitution a wider variety of options need to be available that are designed with the specific needs of these youth in mind. These include drop-in centres, safehouses for youth where they can live in safety and receive initial assessment and short-term counselling, long-term residential programs, as well as supported living environments for youth after they receive treatment when it is not possible for them to return home.

Beyond the available programs, there are necessary services and resources that are not available in Prince George and that should be put in place to address this problem. One of the key aspects of prostitution identified in the reports and by the service providers is drug and alcohol abuse. Many children who are involved in prostitution have drug and alcohol problems. Yet, there is no drug intervention program in Prince George. The current situation leaves the youth with no options to deal with their problems beyond being sent to treatment centres in other communities in B.C. and outside the province. This option is available on an ad-hoc basis and does not adequately address the problem. The service providers stress the need for a drug

intervention program in Prince George aimed at the specific needs of the youth in question.

The reports recommend developing pro-active educational services for various audiences including youths, services providers, and the larger community to address a) the reality of street prostitution and b) to get the message out that this is an issue of sexual abuse. The Downtown Service Providers agree with this recommendation and suggest developing a documentary on street prostitution in conjunction with the local media which can be shown on television and in other venues. They also recommend organizing public educational events for specific audiences such as parents, schools districts, as well as awareness seminars for helping professionals.

Finally, they concur with the recommendations that stronger legal action be taken on this issue. The legal system should focus its attention on apprehending and convicting those johns and pimps who engage in youth prostitution.

Summary

In summary, the Downtown Service Providers agree with the recommendations made by the recent reports on the problem of youth involved in prostitution and identify some key needs to the Prince George community specifically. In Prince George, there are children currently involved in prostitution. This is a serious problem which should be defined as one of child abuse. The recommendations made to address this problem focus on emphasizing the seriousness of the problem and on providing the necessary resources to prevent children from getting involved in prostitution and to help those currently involved get off the street. The following recommendations are seen as key:

Defining the Issue and Education

- it is crucial to define this problem in a manner that clearly identifies the fact that children involved in prostitution are victims of abuse.

- recommendations and changes implemented to address this problem should be made keeping this conceptualization of child abuse in mind.

- that initiatives should be taken to communicate the definition of child prostitution as abuse to the general community and to those involved with this issue.

- policies, procedures, and protocols should be examined and where necessary revised to ensure that they recognize child prostitution as sexual abuse and incorporate this concept into their practice.

- more research is needed to gather solid information on the problem of youth involved in prostitution.

The Law and Enforcement

• those involved in all aspects of law enforcement must be made aware of the seriousness of youth prostitution and to act accordingly.

• the types and lengths of sentences for pimps and johns convicted under Section 212 of the Criminal Code should be strengthened, and the law be made easier to enforce.

• courts should pursue options which would ensure trials involving child prostitution proceed in a timely manner.

Social Services

• more outreach workers should be hired.

• accommodations (safehouses) where youth can live in safety, and receive initial assessment and short term counselling when it is not possible for them to return home.

• accommodation (group homes) where youth with substance abuse issues, in addition to psychological, emotional, and sexuality issues, can receive counselling and care.

• there is a need for more housing programs with built-in counselling services care.

• safe houses are needed for women with children, who have drug/alcohol problems.

• detox. programs geared to youth specifically should be available without long waiting periods.

• detox. programs geared to youth specifically should be available without long waiting periods.

• on going support/outreach after 'recovery' has occurred.

Education

• that an awareness program is developed for students in all schools regarding child prostitution. The material should target all the grades (ages) most likely to be at risk of recruitment or running away; and provide awareness to all youth. This material should be presented by specially trained facilitators.

• information should be provided to all upper elementary, junior and senior high school educators regarding the issue of child prostitution. Material should be developed and an appropriate approach to delivering the information needs to be determined. Information to educators must be delivered annually and should include at least the following: risk factors/ early identifications; resources available in local communities; child prostitution defined as sexual abuse; current issues and trends, e.g., language, new recruitment strategies, etc.

• that universities and colleges with programs geared toward "helping professions" provide information to students regarding child prostitution.

• the information developed for students, educators, and other helping professionals be made available to parents and parent groups in all schools.

• government at all levels should work in consultation with communities and the media to establish a strategy to raise public awareness regarding the issue of child prostitution.

• educational opportunities should be made available to children who are involved in prostitution recognizing their special needs and requirement for alternate and flexible programming. This

alternative education needs to encourage youth to return to school and support reintegration into the traditional school system when the youth is ready.

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